

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

1. Applicant's election with traverse of Group I in the reply filed on 05/10/2010 is acknowledged.
2. Claims 7-10 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a nonelected invention, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Applicant timely traversed the restriction (election) requirement in the reply filed on 05/10/2010.

Priority

3. Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

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1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

6. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

7. Claims 1, 3, and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Berendsen, EP 0679406 (already of record), in view of McPhail, WO 00/59553 (already of record), Chevrette, US Patent 4145768, and Noren, et al, US Patent 5511570 (already of record).

8. Regarding claim 1, Berendsen '406 teaches a method of cooling cleaned and disinfected objects contained in a chamber of an automatic washing machine that has an outflow and a door providing access to the chamber (lid 8 of figure 1 provides access to couplings A1, etc; col. 6, lines 5-11), said method comprising the following steps:

- a) the cleaning of the items carried out using water with addition of auxiliary agents (col.4, lines 5-8),
- b) disinfecting the cleaned items with heat (col. 3, line 55 – col. 4, line 3),

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c) air being forcibly introduced into the closed chamber after the heat treatment of objects (6, 23, and 26 of figure 2 and col. 7, lines 8-31), and
d) with the door of the chamber being closed (col. 2, lines 9-11 teaches that the cupboard itself is closed; col. 6, lines 5-11 teach that the lid 8 is lockable to make a fluid-tight seal at the bowl 7 of figure 1), the exhaust air being conveyed out of the closed chamber into an outflow, through an exhaust duct (29.4, 27, 9, and X of figure 2; col. 7, lines 26-29).

Berendsen '406 does not teach that the outflow is at a lower end of the chamber, from which liquid can flow by gravity; that the exhaust duct has an exhaust valve, wherein the outflow contains a siphon bend; and the exhaust duct opens into the outflow at a location downstream of the siphon bend.

In the analogous art of sterilization devices, McPhail '553 teaches a method wherein an exhaust duct contains an exhaust valve (122 of figure 8; pg 13, lines 1-5) and the exhaust valve conveys air from the device (pg 13, lines 1-5) in order to regulate the pressure in the device (pg 13, lines 1-5).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to have provided a method as claimed in view of Berendsen '406, in further view of McPhail '553, in order to regulate the pressure in the device.

McPhail '553 further teaches a method wherein an outflow contains a siphon bend (figure 8 shows several bends in the outflow after the exhaust valve).

The combination of Berendsen '406 and McPhail '553 are silent as to a method wherein the outflow is at a lower end of the chamber, from which liquid can flow by

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gravity and wherein an exhaust duct opens into the outflow at a location downstream of a siphon bend.

The combination of Berendsen '406 and McPhail '553 could be modified such that the outflow contained a siphon bend such that the exhaust duct opened into the outflow at a location downstream of the siphon bend as a matter of a change in shape without unexpected results. Such modifications have been held within the ambit of one having ordinary skill in the art; see MPEP § 2144.04. However, Berendsen '406 and McPhail '553 do not provide a motivation for such a modification.

In an analogous art of fluid handling, Chevrette '768 teaches a device wherein an exhaust gas duct (tubing 27 of figure 1; col. 2, lines 17-26; the tube would contain air when not in use, some of which would be forced through the tube as liquid passes) opens into an outflow (drain pipe 30 of figure 1; col. 2, lines 27-30) at a location downstream of a siphon bend (by delivery end 29, downstream of sink trap 40, shown as a siphon bend in figure 1; col. 2, lines 30-39) in order to provide a unified fluid outflow from the device (col. 2, lines 39-42; air in the house 26 would be forced through by passing liquids).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to have provided a method wherein the outflow contains a siphon bend and the exhaust duct opens into the outflow at a location downstream of the siphon bend in the method of Berendsen '406 and McPhail '553, in further view of Chevrette '768, in order to provide a unified fluid outflow from the device.

The combination of Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, and Chevrette '768 is silent as to a

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method wherein the outflow is at a lower end of the chamber, from which liquid can flow by gravity.

In an analogous art of dishwashing, Noren '570 teaches a method wherein an outflow is at a lower end of the chamber, from which liquid can flow by gravity (col. 2, lines 42-44) in order to drain the chamber (col. 2, lines 42-44).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to have provided a method wherein an outflow is at a lower end of the chamber, from which liquid can flow by gravity in the method of Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, and Chevrette '768, in further view of Noren '570 in order to drain the chamber.

9. Regarding claim 3, Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, and Noren '570 teach a method of claim 1, as applied above.

Berendsen '406 further teaches that an additional drying of cleaned items will take place during prolonged duration of the removal of moist exhaust air (col. 5, lines 5-8) and that the removal takes place while the chamber door is closed (col. 7, lines 23-29). It is implicit in the reference that additional discharge of residual heat will take place as more air is flushed through.

10. Regarding claim 5, Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, and Noren '570 teach a method of claim 1, as applied above.

Berendsen '406 further teaches that the operating means can be activated by the control panel (90 of figure 1; 26 and 50 of figure 2; col. 7, lines 8-14; and col. 10, lines 40-47) in order to reduce the risk of human error in the machine's operation (col. 8, lines

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40-47). Providing automatic shut-off elements in the exhaust air duct and in the intake air duct, respectively, for controlling the flow of intake air and exhaust air, would be obvious as a matter of enabling this teaching.

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have further provided automatic shut-off elements in the exhaust air duct and in the intake air duct, respectively, for controlling the flow of intake air and exhaust air, in the method of Berendsen '406, Chevrette '768, and McPhail '553 in order to reduce the risk of human error in the machine's operation.

11. Claims 4 and 6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, and Noren '570 as applied to claims 1, 3, and 5 above, and further in view of Sanford, US 5225160 (already of record).

Regarding claim 4, Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, and Noren '570 teach the method of claim 1 but do not specify the use of ambient air for the cooling of objects; rather, it specifies the use of compressed air.

However, Berendsen '406 additionally teaches that flushing through air accelerates the cleaning process by discharging condensation and residual heat (col. 5, lines 5-8).

In an analogous art of instrument cleaning methods, Sanford '160 teaches the circulation of ambient air in cooling objects after steam sterilization (col. 5, lines 3-7) as an equivalent method of accelerating the cleaning process.

Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to circulate the ambient air of Stanford '160, as an alternative

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equivalent in the method of Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, and Noren '570 in order to accelerate the cleaning process.

12. Regarding claim 6, Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, and Noren '570 teach a method of claims 1, 3, and 5, as applied above; Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, Noren '570, and Stanford '160 teach a method of claim 4, as applied above.

Stanford '160 additionally teaches air admitted through the air intake duct of the chamber is guided through a microfilter (80 of figure 1; col.2, lines 54-58; col. 5, lines 3-7) in order to provide decontaminated air for drying.

Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art of steam sterilization to provide a sterilizing means such as a filter for the drying air in the method of Berendsen '406, McPhail '553, Chevrette '768, Noren '570, and Stanford '160, in order to provide decontaminated air for drying.

Response to Arguments

13. Applicant's arguments with respect to claim 1 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

14. In response to applicant's argument that Berendsen '406 and McPhail '553 cannot be physically combined, the test for obviousness is not whether the features of a secondary reference may be bodily incorporated into the structure of the primary reference; nor is it that the claimed invention must be expressly suggested in any one or all of the references. Rather, the test is what the combined teachings of the references

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would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981).

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to CHRISTOPHER VANDEUSEN whose telephone number is (571)270-5020. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 6 PM, EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Walter Griffin can be reached on (571) 272-1447. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/CKV/

/Walter D. Griffin/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1774